



The effect of User-Generated Content to promote tourism destinations: the importance of perceived authenticity and trust.

Camilla Bandinelli

Dissertation written under the supervision of Cláudia Costa

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Abstract

Title: The effect of User-Generated Content used to promote tourism destinations: the importance of authenticity and trust.

Author: Camilla Bandinelli

Nowadays, choosing the right travel destination is not easy. Destinations are numerous, as well as the information available, thanks to Internet and the User-Generated Content shared. Moreover, as a shift towards experiential tourism is taking place, accommodation alone is no longer enough to create an experience. A search for authenticity grows, together with the need to trust that what is advertised is actually real. This thesis aims to examine if destinations can increase their competitive advantage if the destination is advertised with UGC and if the effect on travel and sharing intention would be grater due to the perceived authenticity and trust of the content presented.

The hypotheses were tested through an online experimental study using a promotional video created by the firms' professional or by travellers. The data have been collected through MTurk measuring perceptions of authenticity, trust and travelling and WOM intentions. A significant higher preference for travelling and recommend were showed when the promotional ad was UGC and a mediation effect was found both for trust and authenticity. Four types of travellers were identified, and the perceived authenticity was found to be higher for the Drifter just compared to the Individual Mass Tourist. Our findings can assist travel companies and tourism bodies to promote their destinations by using UGC in their marketing strategy. Such strategies are perceived as more authentic and overcome consumers mistrust in firm generated marketing communications consequently increasing the intention to visit and to recommend. Limitations and future research are also discussed.

Keywords: User Generated Content, Trust, Authenticity, WOM, Travel intention, Tourism.

Sumário

Título: O efeito dos conteúdos gerados pelos utilizadores utilizados para promover destinos turísticos: a importância da autenticidade e da confiança.

Autor: Camilla Bandinelli

Hoje em dia, escolher o destino de viagem certo não é fácil. Os destinos são numerosos, assim como a informação disponível, graças à Internet e ao Conteúdo Gerado pelo Utilizador. Além disso, como está a ocorrer uma mudança para o turismo experimental, o alojamento por si só já não é suficiente para criar uma experiência. A procura da autenticidade cresce, juntamente com a necessidade de confiar que o que é anunciado é real. Esta tese visa examinar se os destinos podem aumentar a sua vantagem competitiva se anunciado com a UGC e se o efeito sobre as viagens e a intenção de partilha seria maior, devido à percepção da autenticidade e confiança no conteúdo apresentado.

As hipóteses foram testadas através de um estudo experimental em linha utilizando um vídeo promocional criado pelo profissional da empresa ou por viajantes. Os dados foram recolhidos através do MTurk. Foi demonstrada uma preferência significativamente maior por viajar e recomendar quando o anúncio promocional era UGC e foi encontrado um efeito de mediação tanto para a confiança como para a autenticidade. Foram identificados quatro tipos de viajantes, e a percepção da autenticidade foi mais elevada para The Drifter apenas em comparação com Individual Mass Tourist. As nossas conclusões podem ajudar as empresas de viagens e os organismos turísticos a promover os seus destinos, utilizando a UGC na sua estratégia de marketing. As limitações e a investigação futura são também discutidas.

Palavras-chave: Conteúdo gerado pelo utilizador, Confiança, Autenticidade, Palavra de boca, Intenção de viajar, Turismo, Publicidade

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List of Abbreviation

UGC – User Generated Content

FGC – Firm Generated Content

WOM – Word of Mouth

eWOM – Electronic Word of Mouth

WTO – World Tourism Organization

DR – Drifter

IMT – Individual Mass Tourist

EX – Explorer

OMT – Organized Mass Tourist

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

UA – Uncertainty Avoidance

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, tourism has been deeply diversified and has become one of the most important sectors for the global economy. It is closely linked to the development of a country and generates a volume of business equivalent, or higher, to that of oil, food or car exports. According to the World Tourism Organization (2018), the number of international tourists has increased exponentially, from 25 million in 1950 to 1.2 billion in 2016, reaching a forecast of 1.8 billion in 2030.

These figures indicate increasing competition within touristic destinations. Tourists from all over the world have the possibility to choose from a wide range of tourist destinations and this makes the tourists final decision not easy. There are numerous offers to consumers and the choice depends on the value given to the destination by each individual (Petracca, 2019). Thus, in order to seize the opportunity and become the *most* attractive, destinations will need to find a way to stand out. More precisely, there is the importance to understand what travellers expect from the trips and which type of travellers are present in the market to fully comprehend which is the target to focus on and how to address promotional advertisings.

Nowadays tourism organizations cannot ignore the increasing popularity of advertisements, sites and social media containing User-Generated Content (UGC) and neither the role played in the travel decision-making process of travellers. Indeed, these sites can prove information that influences the final booking plans associated with travel (Cox et al, 2009). Approximately 95% of internet users rely on information from the web for their travel information search process (Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006, and the most consulted online source is for the 83% UGC (FusePump, 2015). Moreover, according to a survey conducted by Stackla (2017), 42% of consumers were influenced by UGC when planning travel.

With the rising of Web 2.0, defined as “the second generation of web-based services that have gained massive popularity by letting people collaborate and share information online in previously unavailable ways” (Reactive, 2007, p.3), a large number of tourists publish their experiences on blogs, travel sites, tourism and non-tourism social networks to document their trip and provide useful information to other readers. These virtual documents are defined as User-Generated content (UGC) and they have become a primary source of information for other tourists who are planning a trip (Petracca 2019; Rushton & Kennell 2015).

Tourism organizations and operators started to take advantage of this trend. Firms realized that people's recommendations and personal experience are more persuasive than a simple search product (Manap and Adzharudin, 2013), and that firms that strategically integrate UGC with Firm-Generated Content (FGC) produce better business outcomes (Wang, Noble, Dahl, Park, 2019). Involving customers in advertising has provided valuable insights and build a sense of collaboration and engagement with consumers (Thompson & Malaviya, 2011), even if brands have less control and inconsistency over the brand message (Story, 2007). One way to deal with this problem is to use a co-opting strategy, in which firms encourage customers to create ads but retain final say on the message that is broadcasted (Berthon, Pitt and Campbell, 2008). In fact, the good news is that while these new technologies allow consumers to produce and share a wide number of visual contents, the UGC also provides marketers with new avenues for content (co-creation). This not only involves the engaging and reposting of consumer-generated contents but also the active co-construction of visuals ads with consumers (Gretzel, 2017).

For example, Hong Kong launched the "I never knew" campaign which invites both locals and visitors to share their stories about Hong Kong with the aim of co-creating authentic experiences to allow future tourists to tap into local knowledge instead of focusing on the major tourism offering (Hong Kong, 2018). Tourism New Zealand used drone-videos to film tourists while enjoying the ski slopes of New Zealand and could request their drone (a drone-based selfie) video to be emailed to them. Tourism New Zealand then encouraged people to share these videos on social media with the hashtag #NZDronie, ensuring that the campaign led to considerable social media buzz (Gretzel, 2017).

The importance of content generated by the users in tourism arises from the fact that researches shown that, especially among travellers, UGC is considered to be more trustworthy and authentic compared to information provided by companies' marketing departments or agencies (O'Connor, 2010, Thompson & Malaviya, 2011). In fact, authenticity and trust are considered to be two significant concepts in today's tourism industry.

Authenticity is getting more and more value in tourism (Dennet et Song, 2016) as part of a broader tourism mega-trend towards "authen-tricity" (authenticity-centricity). In the past, trips were often conceptualised as travelling to an epic distant place to visit the most beautiful monuments around the world and have the own picture taken. In those days, such landmarks had a greater impact to assist decision of the places to visit. Currently, such landmarks are losing its attraction role as people are bombarded with imagery and open access to information about those objects prior to the effective

attendance, turning such landmarks closer. But while technological and cultural landscapes have changed over time, the conception of what is to travel has resisted change. It is thus not surprising that people feel a sort of emptiness when coming upon a major historical landmark who is been seen and seen a thousand times before through a screen (Horder, 2017). For this reason, authenticity is considered to be essential in tourism because it is important to understand what makes travel meaningful to the modern travellers in order to better address their needs (Horder, 2017). Denet and Song (2016), stated that tourists are no longer satisfied with standard tourism activities, but they are seeking a deeper understanding of the destination. Simplifying, travellers' thirst for living authentic local customs and culture: what Pine, Pine II, and Gilmore (1999) call the "Experience economy". As Pine (2004) noted the more the experience economy matures, the more a shift towards authenticity is observed. When choosing to buy or not consumers base their decision on how real they perceive the service to be. Thus, the perception of authenticity will emerge as a driver for tomorrow's tourist (Yeoman et al 2007).

In addition, every operator in the sector must therefore always remember that its main objective must not only be to generate an immediate economic profit, but to be able to provide value to its customers and to obtain and maintain their satisfaction, bearing in mind that, if you want to achieve good results in the long term, the trust of customers must not be betrayed, but respected and strengthened continuously (ABC Strategies, 2016). Trust is vital to any business and in particular way for the tourism industry - especially when offering a service that is mostly discretionary and where price competition has surged with online shopping, where social media amplify and disseminate every negative experience and where once-trusted intermediaries are being replaced by technology (Klein, 2019). In fact, the degree to which travellers trust the information provided by UGC sites or advertisements when making travel plans will determine how persuasive these sites or advertisements are in influencing the actual travel plans made (Naragajavana, 2017).

1.1. Problem Statement and Research Aim

Being both trust and authenticity two of the main outcomes associated with a UGC message we will investigate whether authentic and trust are enhanced in an UGC ad against the more traditional form of advertising with content produced by the firm. Thus, we expect that an authentic and trustworthy message will influence the traveller's destination decision and sharing intentions. This would be due to greater authenticity and trust in the content presented. Moreover, it will be examined if there will be the possibility to identifies and segments different typologies of traveller, along a familiarity-novelty continuum suggested by Cohen's (1972) researches. Once identified, it will be seen if

different types of travellers moderate the effect on the promotional video advertising perceived authenticity.

On the base of that, this communication strategy could be used as a tool to create a competitive advantage for travel companies. Travel destination would also benefit from increase attractiveness for a destination itself, considering the wide range of choices that tourists have today (Petracca 2019).

1.2. Research Questions

As above mentioned, there is a need to find out possible solutions to promote destinations in order to increase attractiveness and create competitive advantage. Subsequently, the research objective of this thesis is to find out if the use of User-Generated content can be the answer. The research questions that need to be answered to reach the research objective are the following:

- *Does UGC influence the traveller's travel decision and the intention to share through eWOM over FGC?*
- *Can the preference for promotional advertising made by UGC travellers be explained by feelings of authenticity and trustworthy?*
- *Do all travellers perceive UGC in the same way? Or are there some profiles where communication by UGC is more effective?*

1.3. Overview of the study

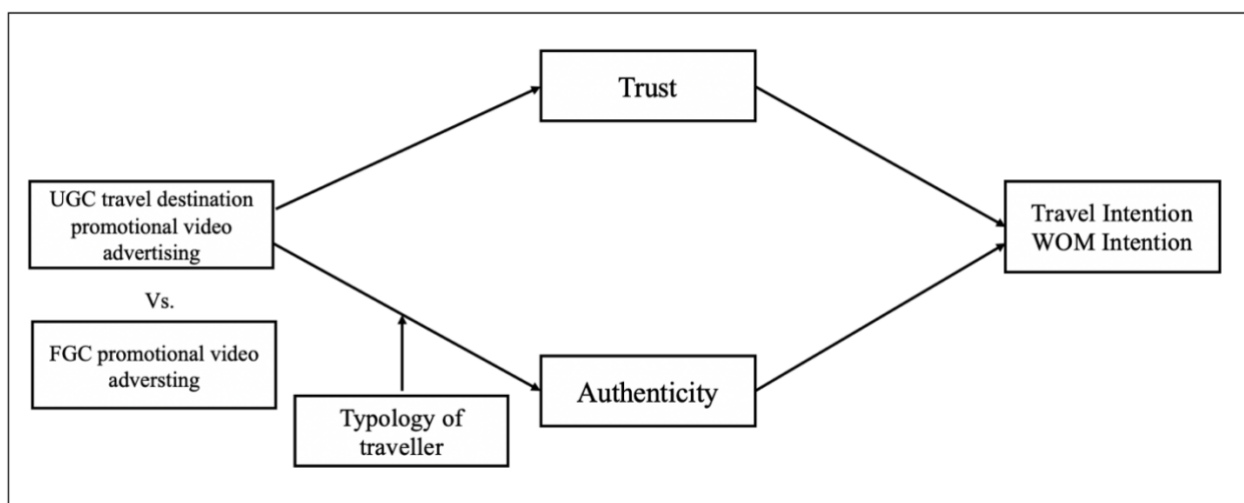


Figure 1: Overview of the study

2. Literature Review

2.1. User-Generated Content (UGC)

Co-creation is used by management literature to emphasize the role of the customer in the creation of value (Grönroos, 2012). From the point of view of co-creation, suppliers and customers are on the same side of the value creation, interacting with each other in order to develop new business opportunities (Galvano & Dalli, 2014). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) refer to co-creation saying that business competition used to be like a traditional theatre: actors had defined roles and costumers the audience sat in the back passively watching the show. Now the roles have changed: business competition is more like the 1960s and 1970s experimental theatre in which everybody can be part of the action, both actors and spectators.

There are multiple strategies developed to involve consumers in the marketing and production processes such as workshops, crowdsourcing, mass customizations, and open sources (Jain, 2017). One of the most used technique today is the co-creation through User-Generated Content (UGC). User-Generated Content refers to media content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet (Daugherty, Eastin, Bright, 2008).

UGC gives the possibility to other consumers to read, learn about, and share the experiences of others (Ukpabi and Kajaluoto, 2018). Blackshaw (2006) defined UGC as “media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers”. The ways in which UGC are created and shared have evolved during the times into different forms: virtual communities, consumer reviews, blogs, social networks, and media sharing tools (Lu and Stepchenkova, 2014)

2.1.1. UGC as advertising and sharing tool

UGC is considered to be a more reliable source of information compared to other sources because the contents are created by people from the one's personal network. For this reason, firms are beginning to use UGC in their marketing efforts (Nam, Manchanda, & Chintagunta, 2010) gaining importance in the firm's advertising campaigns (Walter, 2012). As a result, the conventional marketing model, which is usually publisher-centric, is shifting toward the online information sharing market (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008). Extant researches have shown that firms that use UGC in combination with Firm-Generated Content (FGC) are able to produce better business results. (Hewett et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2016). In 2015, 78% of B2C companies incorporated UGC in their advertising campaigns (Content Marketing Institute, 2015).

Firms engage in UGC campaign through different approaches: consumer can be asked to develop the ad concept which an ad agency then produces, or can be asked to both create and produce the ad. These co-created videos can then be distributed online in several video-hosting sites and social media outlets. (Thompson and Malaviya, 2013). The use of this new way of generating content provides marketers with a new avenue for content co-creation: not just by reposting of UGC but also active co-construction of visual with consumers (Gretzel, 2017) For this reason, the UGC and thus, interaction and engagement have become the new form of marketing which will determine the competitiveness of organizations in the future (Gretzel, 2017).

Some of the main advantages for firms related to UGC are that they allow for creativity, they are more credible and especially they are free (Pogliani, 2018). UGC is also described as an electronic form of word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM) (Lu and Stepchenkova, 2014) meaning the extent to which costumers inform others of an experience that was satisfactory to them (Soderlund, 1998). In fact, a powerful role played by UGC for companies is its sharing side. World-Of-Mouth (WOM) is extremely important, especially in tourism sector, as quality of tourism products and services is not known prior to consumption (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). As most tourism products are intangible, people rely on others who have first-hand experiences to receive relevant information (Wang et al, 2016). WOM intention is also consider as one of the factors that can reflect the influence of UGC (Li-Shia Huang et al. 2008), and the interestingness of UGC could attract more consumers to disseminate and discuss the information. Having that in mind, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: *Consumers will have a higher WOM intention regarding a travel destination that is advertised as UGC than when is advertised as FGC.*

2.2. Tourism

Tourism is one of the most important sectors, generating over 10 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and with an employment potential of about 10% of the world's workforce (UNWTO, 2019). This sector is now one of the fastest-growing sectors in the developed economy. In fact, according to the World Tourism Organization (2018), the number of international tourists has increased exponentially, from 25 million in 1950 to 1.2 billion in 2016, reaching a forecast of 1.8 billion in 2030.

The first definitions of tourism date back to the beginning of the 20th century, but since the early 1970s (Burkart and Medlik, 1974) authors and experts on the subject distinguished tourism definition in two main groups: technical and concept definitions.

According to the technical approach *"tourism is an industry that represents the sum of industrial and commercial activities that produce goods and services consumed in whole or in part by foreign visitors or domestic tourism"* (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 1971). The technical vision had the main intent of measuring the economic consequences of tourism expenditure, tourism has the physiognomy of a single industry: tourist was seen as a simple expenditure unit (Ferrucci, 2011).

On the other hand, the conceptual definition of tourism looks at the essence of the phenomenon, with its heterogeneity of activities and behaviours of all its actors. The conceptual view considers the tourist as an active subject with psychological and sociological aspects. (Ferrucci, 2011). Tourism becomes a *"market, a movement of people"*, or a *"set of ideas, theories or ideologies of being a tourist, and of people's behaviour in tourist roles, when ideas are put into practice"* (Leiper, 1990).

In 2008, Cooper refines Leiper's definition and defines tourism as *"a complex of individuals, businesses, organisations, and locations combine together to produce a travel experience"*. In addition, over the years, some institutions have also worked to define tourism: for WTO is *"a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes."* (UNWTO).

2.2.1. Experiential Tourism and Experiential Economy

Experiences are pervading our society more and more: for operators they represent a tool of differentiation in the scenario of intense competition in which they operate. Pine and Gilmore (1998) were the first to elaborate the theory of the "Experience Economy". The authors define experience as *"a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods"*. Experience as an offer of economic value finds its oldest form in the prolonged use of a product, in fact when a person buys a service he or she buys a series of intangible activities made as a side dish, but when he or she buys an experience, he or she pays to enjoy a series of memorable events. Experiences, therefore, constitute a fourth economic proposal that is quite distinct from services, which in turn are distinguished from goods. Today, experience has become relevant and pervades our society (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Therefore, in the economy of experience, the company no longer offers only goods and services, but the resulting experience which is rich in sensations and emotions created in the client. In the economy of experience, it is no longer the product at the centre of attention, but the

consumer. The performance and the use the consumer make of that product for the company are fundamental in order to intensify the experience (Ferrucci, 2011).

Regarding the tourism sector, Pine and Gilmore (2000) are among the first authors to study the experience in tourism. In 2000 the authors talk about experiences as a touristic product or service. Their work refers to the creation of value: the object acquires an added value and thus more desirable. For the tourist, the value of the touristic product is given by the depth and uniqueness of the experience he can live. In fact, today there is a wide range of experience tourism products on offer: many tour operators offer a variety of activities and adventures in which individuals can immerse themselves.

2.2.2. Tourism industry and UGC

Internet is the key source of information during the different stages of the travellers' planning process, (Cox et al., 2009). Web 2.0 has enabled people to create their own on-line information (User-Generated Content) and share it easily through social networks. This growth of social media has inevitably impacted the way consumers' research and buy products, with the travel and tourism sector at the forefront of such change (Rusthon et al., 2015). Tsao, Hsieh, Shih, and Lin (2015) found that approximately 80% of travellers claim to read reviews about a hotel before embarking on a trip, and 53% say that they will not book a hotel that has no reviews.

Three characteristics lead to a growing importance of UGC in the tourism industry. First, tourism is a hedonic experience and for this reason, when travellers need to make a decision, they want to do the best travel decision to make the most of the experience, and they do it by seeking another fellow costumer's experience. Second, tourism cannot be experienced before consumption, so consumers need to rely on other's knowledge. Finally, overall UGC is growing in popularity because third-party advices are deemed to be honest, so consumers rely on them for their travel decision (Ukpabi and Karjaluoto, 2018). In fact, Firm-Generated Content (FGC) usually arouse scepticism, especially in tourism. This happens mostly because travel organizations are looking for financial gain from sharing their experiences with others (Litvin et al., 2008) and the final goal is to "sell" the destination more than advice travellers where to go.

UGC is widely used by tourism and hospitality consumers services both to share information and as source of information for decision-making. Content generated by online customers is perceived as

more up-to-date, reliable, and precise (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). It is not surprising that, given the intangibility nature of travel and impossibility to assess quality before experiencing the trip travellers are relying on information supplied by other people through UGC (Cox et al, 2009). UGC is considered by consumers a manifestation of individual travel experience, which can include rare and unique insights from their close friends, family, or even strangers around the world (Yu and Zou, 2015). Travellers can take a look at videos, graphics, and photos that some other users, tourists, or experienced travellers have posted online (Manap and Adzharudin, 2013).

According to Manap and Adzharudin (2013) consumers tend to be more influenced by the recommendations of people who already tested a product than from a product search. Therefore, it is expected that it would also apply to the tourism industry. In fact, today, the use of Internet to reach destination information is become increasingly common, and being the websites, social media, and blogs the main channels in which UGC proliferates, consequently more and more people are exposed to UGC when seeking to travel decision-making. Recently researches confirmed that UGC, does influence destination relation decision-making (Rusthon et al., 2015). Since one's social network usually includes friends and family, it further contributes to the information shared on Internet being perceived as reliable (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). As such, UGC could influence others' attitude and play an important role motivating people to visit a destination (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2015; Litvin et al., 2008) and in particular, UGC is found to influence not only those exposed to it but also the content creators themselves (Rusthon et al., 2015).

H2: *Consumers will display higher travel intention when exposed to a destination advertised as UGC than when FGC.*

2.3. Authenticity

From Greek *authentikós* (principal, genuine), the word “authenticity” indicates a sense of true and it refers to the genuine “real thing” (Robinson, Hitmann and Dieke, 2019) but it can also be associated with tradition and identity, when it allows for the rediscovery of identity and reflects what individuals are or would like to be (Sharpley 1994; Pine and Gilmore 2010).

The concept of authenticity has been studied by authors such as Plato, Dostoevsky, and Freud (Yeoman et al., 2007) and in many different fields (sociology, anthropology, psychology, economy, marketing, etc.) (Antón et al., 2019). Common to all studies is the paramount importance given to authenticity (Yeoman et al., 2007). Throughout time, the term authenticity has shown different facets (Camus, 2003). During the Middle Age, authentic meant famous and notable. Later, it became something original that cannot be changed.

2.3.1. Authenticity in tourism

Authenticity in tourism can be viewed under three different levels: objective, constructive, and existential (Wang, 1999).

Objective authenticity occurs when tourists seek authenticity as an intrinsic quality of the objects they buy or consume. It is therefore an authenticity more easily identifiable and recognizable in the aspects and characteristics of an object, a service consumed, or a place visited. In fact, the authenticity criterion is absolute and objective (Wang 1999).

Constructive authenticity, on the other hand, changes according to the type of tourist, since it is perceived according to his or her beliefs, expectations and preferences, and the way he or she experiences it (Pearce and Moscardo 1985; Littrell and others 1993) In this scenario, authenticity is not an objectively measurable quality of what is being visited (Wang, 1999).

Finally, existential authenticity represents a non-materialistic response to the search for authenticity: it is in fact satisfied through the activities and experiences that individuals carry out with the aim of rediscovering a renewed identity that they have lost in the modern society in which they live (Berger, 1973). In this case, authenticity is an existential condition of the individual. The existential authenticity comprises feeling which let people live more freely and spontaneously, far from the dogmas and constraints imposed by society, and express themselves fully. Moreover, individuals live their emotions and feelings in a deep, spontaneous, and natural way, without the limitations, obligations, and responsibilities of everyday life. As, the concept of tourist take into consideration in this study is the experiential tourism, the definition of authenticity which is more in line with the considerations done so far, is the existential authenticity. From an emotional point of view, the experiential tourism can be thought as something that is able to trigger an emotion. Theoretically, it is possible to say that every tourist experience makes people learn something. In particular, they are able to involve tourists on an emotional, physical and intellectual level and make them learn something (Smith, 2006) far away from their routine life, which coincides with the definition of existential authenticity.

2.3.2. Authenticity and the impact on tourism sector

Existential authenticity, in the tourism sector, is related to an experience that involves a sense of self identity activated by the liminality of tourism and informed by both interpersonal (family ties, communities) and intrapersonal dimensions (bodily feelings, self-making) (Wang, 1999). Existential authenticity is experience-oriented; it is associated with the tourist's perception of the validity of

experiences related with self-disclosure and self-realization as opposed to the genuineness of visited objects (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

In the tourism context, authenticity it is argued to be the “holy grail” for tourism because is one of the key drivers for the majority of tourism experiences (Robinson, Hitmann and Dieke, 2011).

The disclosure of authenticity in the tourism studies is to be attributed to Dean McCannell (1973) who was the first arguing about the concept of authenticity and tourism motivation by saying that tourists are looking for authentic experiences which are not available in their travellers’ daily lives (Waller & Lea, 1999). Moreover, today, travellers want to immerse themselves in the local cultures and environments (Dennett and Song, 2016), living real and unique experiences: what Pine, Pine II and Gilmore (1999) call “the experience economy”. A move beyond goods and services to experiences, *authentic* experience. In fact, Pine (2004) also observed that as the experience economy matures, a shift is identified towards authenticity. The consumers’ buying intention is highly influenced by the perception of a specific product/service to be authentic (Yeoman et al., 2007).

Nowadays there is a growing need to seek for experiences and products which are original and real, not contaminated by being fake or impure. These search for authenticity has been translated to the marketing context. In fact, it is common to observe in marketing and promotional statements such as “The Real Italy”, “The Real Greece” ... “The authentic Italian houses” (Waller & Lea, 1998, p.111). with the aim of shows the significance of authenticity in the promotion of authentic experiences (Kuon, 2011). Authenticity is therefore a determining factor in deciding whether or not to buy a tourist product, visit a territory or a destination (McCannell, 1998).

2.3.3. Authenticity and UGC

Jukin Media and The University of Southern California Master's Program in Applied Psychology collaborated in order to develop a research which had the aim to compare the attractiveness of UGC video with professionally produced images. The results found out that video which incorporate UGC are 31% more likely to be described by consumers as “unique”, and “memorable”. Moreover, the ad created with UGC was considered 11% more authentic (Elkins and Webster, 2018).

In line with this finding, the User-Generated Content for marketing purposes is on the rise especially because they are perceived as more authentic, credible and memorable which is exactly what people are looking for today. Particularly since consumers are more and more distrusting of marketing and advertising messages from firms. Majority of consumers report that less than half of brands are able to generate content that resonates as authentic (Stackla, 2017). Thus, authenticity is critical for when deciding what brand supports. Today, social media’s increasing influence and UGC eases

communication and helps establish authenticity (Rickly and Vidon 2018). According to Dittmer (2010) representations are “claim about a places’ characteristics and because consumption is getting more interactive and visual, social networks are better able to let tourists search content and get some sense of what to expect, playing an important role in travel decision. The UGC shared about a destination provides people with contemporary insight into “generated authenticity” based on post underlying experiences and seeking online interaction to gain new knowledge of a destination (Rickly and Vidon 2018). UGC helps shape discourses and influence people’s perception and conveys what it is believed to be an authentic representation of a place and society (Rickly and Vidon 2018). Furthermore, from a research conducted as a part of Authentic Brands Series of John & Wolfe, 63% of consumers indicate that they would prefer to buy from the companies which they regard as authentic. In addition to this, 59% of them stated that they would recommend such a business to their family and friends (John and Wolfe, 2014).

Since perceived authenticity plays such important role in determining individuals’ travel intentions, and WOM intention, and that the UGC is considered to be a source of greater authenticity and credibility, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H3a: *The effect of advertising source on travel intention is mediated by perceived authenticity. Such that higher travel intention for consumers exposed to an ad advertised as UGC is explained by higher perceived authenticity than in ads advertised as FGC.*

H3b: *The effect of advertising source on WOM intention is mediated by perceived authenticity. Such that higher WOM intention for consumers exposed to an ad advertised as UGC is explained by higher perceived authenticity than in ads advertised as FGC.*

2.4. Trust

The concept of trust was first introduced by phycologists in the 1950s and then made its way into many other areas such as sociology (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Zucker, 1986), management (Das & Teng, 1998; Hosmer, 1995), and marketing (Anderson & Weitz, 1989; Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992). Related to the marketing sector, trust appears when one party in a commercial transaction has confidence in certain special features of the other party (Wang et al, 2014). According to a psychological perspective, trust can be useful in order to reduce anxiety in the decision-making process or dilemmas (Kramer, 1999). Gwinner et al. (1998) stated that trust has psychological benefits

which are more important than special treatment or social benefits in the relationship between service firms and costumer.

Trust is a vital element to maintain and develop every type of relationship and for this reason has obtained increasing attention from the hospitality and tourism world (Wang et al, 2014). Since the 1990s researchers started to study trust in the tourism field trying to integrate the intrinsic nature of this field with definitions from other disciplines such as psychology and sociology (Wang et al, 2014). One of the most used definitions is proposed by Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman (1993) who define trust as “the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence” (p. 315).

2.4.1. Trust in UGC

Travelers nowadays heavily rely on friends, family, and other peer groups advice when planning travel to a not yet visited destination (Litvin et al.,2008), especially for the travel intangible nature. In fact, UGC becomes a valuable tourism information resource (Yoo et al., 2009). The posts including videos, photos, and texts done by tourists about their travels, have all improved during the time, and this increases the level of trust in social media (Yoo et al., 2009). Research shows that consumers tend to trust more this type of information compared to commercial content created by travel agents or accommodation operators (Cox et al, 2009), mostly because the information providers are not looking for financial gain when sharing their experiences with others (Litvin et al.,2008). In fact, UGC provides more trustworthy and up-to-date information (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). According to Yu and Zou (2015), the level of post credibility perceived related to tourism influences consumer’s purchase intention. In addition, the more credible a UGC is perceived, the greater the likelihood of consumers’ favourable behavioural intentions (Narangajavana et al, 2017). Thus, trust in UGC can influence the tourist’s perspective, so that the use of UGC in planning a trip will allow tourists to make a decision with a higher level of knowledge thanks to others’ experiences (Narangajavana et al, 2017). Related to the understanding of how UGC influences the travel decision-making process, trust in information that are posts on the sites is one of the most argued issues (Narangajavana et al, 2017). One of the concerns that are raised is how the consumer can be assured that the reviews are in fact independent and hence trustworthy (Gretzel, 2006). The perceived trustworthiness of third-party information is the central reason why people use UGC in their decision-making process (Akehurst, 2008; Page and Pitt, 2011). Recent studies stated that people trust more in UGC than in information provided by travel company marketing departments (Lo et al., 2011; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014; Marine-Roig, 2014). This growth in UGC trust doesn’t seem to stop at the expense of FGC. Ultimately, the degree to which travellers trust the information provided by UGC sites when making

travel plans will determine how persuasive these sites are in influencing the actual travel plans made (Naragajavana, 2017).

H4a: *The effect of advertising source on travel intention is mediated by perceived trust. Such that higher travel intention for consumers exposed to an ad advertised as UGC is explained by higher perceived trust than in ads advertised as FGC.*

H4b: *The effect of advertising source on WOM intention is mediated by perceived trust. Such that higher WOM intention for consumers exposed to an ad advertised as UGC is explained by higher perceived trust than in ads advertised as FGC.*

2.5. Typologies of travellers

This study tries to develop a profile of traveller based on their psychographic makeup, rather than on the geographic variables found in a lot of tourist statistics published by government organizations in several countries. Hassan and Katsanis (1991) stated that the traditional approach using geographic variables have some important limitations. First of all, it is not based on consumer behaviour pattern, then it supposes total homogeneity of the country segment and finally it neglects the presence of homogeneous sections that exist across national limits. Plog (1994) therefore concludes that a segmentation system made through a psychographic segment if it is successful, produce clearly defined groupings of individuals with similar personalities, lifestyles, and interest pattern. These profiles would differ from each other enough to offer some important guidelines/market-based information for developing an appropriate communication strategies Keng et al (1999).

The use of psychographics variables can overcome the common problem in tourism research which use socioeconomic and demographic variables to segment markets - people who have similar age, income, and occupation do not necessarily possess the travel interest. Strongly related with the use of psychographics in the tourism sector is the development of traveller typologies. One of the better-known tourist typologies is that developed by Cohen (1972), a sociologist of tourism, who used personality traits to identify different expectation when travelling. The author classifies tourists into four types, based on the degree to which travellers seek familiarity and novelty in a continuum that respects the authenticity of the sought experience: the drifter, the explorer, the individual mass tourist, and the organised mass tourist. According to Żegleń and Grzywacz (2016) and Keng et al (1999), the organised mass tourist is the less adventurous who likes to stay primarily inside his or her "condition bubble" all through the vacation. The organised mass tourist matches closest the cliché picture of the

tourist. The excursion agenda is typically orchestrated ahead of time, with prepared and guided stops. The individual mass tourist is similar to the organised mass tourist because his or her travel is mainly organised with the help of a travel agency but differs in that the former have a degree of control over his or her time and itinerary. Thusly, familiarity is as yet prevailing, yet to some degree less so than in the previous type; the experience of novelty is to some degree more prominent; however, it is frequently of the standard kind. The Explorer arranges his or her trip alone and avoid contact with other tourists and interact with locals. During the vacation, he or she is expecting a certain level of security and benefits. In this case, novelty is dominant but keeping some of basic routines and comforts of his or her way of life. Finally, the drifter is the opposite of the organised mass tourist. He or she identifies with the host community by living and make friends among it. The drifter has no planned itinerary, choose destinations and accommodation on whim and she or he is motivated by the “experience” (Weating and Neil, 2009).

These differences in interaction between typologies of tourist and the social environments can be conceptualized with the linkage to the notion of authenticity (Weating and Neil, 2009). MacCannel (1973) associates’ tourism with religious pilgrimage because both of them are homologous in the seek for authentic experiences. He stated that modern life and the alienation of modern man are surrounded by shallowness and inauthenticity and that the real authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other cultures, and in purer and simpler lifestyles. Thus, the continuous search for authenticity induces moderns to become tourist (Apostolopoulos et al, 2013). The organized mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer, and the drifter supposedly seek different levels of authentic experiences, as similarly outlined in Cohen’s (1988) existential-recreational experience spectrum. The drifter often travels independently without a tour guide and he or she is likely to obtain more authentic experience than Cohen’ s other types of tourists (Kuon, 2011). Because of the fact that UGC lead to a higher perception of authenticity the following hypostasis was stated:

H5: *The authenticity perception of the tourism destination promotional video advertising made with UGC is higher for the Cohen’s drifter typology of traveller.*

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The purpose of this work is to understand whether a consumer is persuaded and influenced in his/her travel decision by watching travel promotions videos made or produced by other consumers. If so, this promotional strategy can be used by companies to gain a competitive advantage as well as for destinations itself in order to be more attractive.

Due to the fact that experimental designs are the best way to evaluate causal hypotheses, to test our hypothesis, an online survey was used (Chambliss and Shutt, 2018). The online survey method was chosen to collect data as it provides several major advantages over the phone interview. Online survey offers a higher probability to receive a wide number of answers in quick time while being a cost-efficiency method and it increases productivity while saving time. Data is instantly available and can easily be transferred into specific statistical software. In addition, online surveys have the capability to replicate the desired experimental procedure with several treatments. According to market research experts, the majority of users prefer to respond to online surveys rather than written questionnaires or telephone interviews. Through online interviews, they provide longer and more detailed answers that better match their thoughts and attitudes (Ilieva & Baron & Healey, 2002).

On the other side, this quantitative research procedure can have some disadvantages that can cause limitations in the study. First of all, the absence of the interview which explores the answer of the responded can lead to inaccurate answers. Secondly, online surveys cannot reach people who have no access to internet so the sample cannot be fully representative of the population. Finally, it needed to take into account that one of the most common problems is survey fraud (Ilieva & Baron & Healey, 2002).

After considered the advantages and disadvantages of online surveys, this method was selected to conduct the study.

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was selected for the present study. In a nonprobability technique, each persons' probability to be selected for the study is not specific, contrarily to the probability sampling technique, where all the population members have a known probability of being in the sample. The sampling is convenience since all the participants were conveniently available to participate in the study. According to Malhotra (2010), this sampling technique permits obtaining results with time and cost-efficiency.

Participants were randomly selected in the researcher's own network by sharing the survey's link through email and social media and Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online crowdsourcing platform designed to recruit people to complete different tasks (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). The platform is very useful for student researchers who are investigating a specific topic because it allows them to find a large number of participants in little time and the sample collected is likely to be more diverse than a sample of students reached by the researcher's own network, in addition to higher reliability. Finally, Mechanical Turk supports the embedding of other survey software such as Qualtrics which gives the possibility to create the survey just one time in one single platform and then share from there (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

3.2. Pilot study

In order to be sure that the video stimulus in the survey is suitable for the main study, a pilot study was conducted in Qualtrics. The video used as stimuli is a shortcut made from a YouTube video showing the Bali experience (Chris Roger, 2019). 38 respondents took part in the pilot (7 responses were excluded due to missing values). The survey was randomly distributed through the researcher's own social media network and MTurk. The sample is composed of 57,9% of males, 50% fully employed, 39,5% Italians, 13,2% Americans, and 57,9% with ages between 25 and 34 years old (Millennials).

The participants were introduced with a brief description of the video and then the video was shown. Immediately after, respondents answered questions about the credibility of the video and its ability to promote the specific destination. A 7-point Likert scale with 1=Extremely good/credible ... 7=Not good at all/Not credible at all was used to measure respectively credibility and goodness. To better understand the results the scale was reverse thus, instead of considering 1 as the extremely good/credible, it was considered as not good/credible at all and consequently, the whole scale was inverted.

A T-test against the middle point of the scale (4= Neither credible/good nor not credible/good) was conducted and it showed that both for credibility ($M_{cred} = 6.00$; $SD=.899$) and goodness ($M_{good} = 6.089$; $SD=.804$) are above the middle point. The video is thus perceived both credible and good in promoting the destination travel.

Next, to understand the ecological validity of the stimuli we tested whether the firm and users are credible as producers of the video. Respondents rated the likelihood the video has been done by a travel firm and by travellers (1=Extremely Likely and ... 7= Extremely Unlikely).

To better understand the results the scale was reverse thus, instead of considering 1 as the extremely likely, it was considered as extremely unlikely and consequently, the whole scale was inverted. The results showed that there is not a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($M_{UGC}=5.76$, $M_{FGC}=5.95$, $p > .05$) Thus, respondents perceived the video done by firms or travellers as equally credible and as such we could confidently proceed with using it in the main study.

3.3. Procedure

The objective of the study is to explore preferences for a destination when it is advertised with video content produced by users or firms. The study uncovers the roles of perceived trust and authenticity. Also, it aims to understand the impact that traveller type has on the perceived authenticity of the promotional video. In order to understand the effects of the outlined framework, a two (User-Generated Content vs Firm-Generated Content) between subject online survey design has been considered as being most suitable to evaluate the impact of the presented independent variable on consumer decisions and intentions. The dependent variables are travelling intentions and likelihood of recommendation (WOM). The independent variable is the design-mode related to who created the content of the advertisement (UGC vs FGC).

Between April 22nd and May 1st, 307 participants conducted an online survey. After the data check, 40 responses were considered invalid because they had missing values or outliers that would jeopardize results and, therefore, were deleted from the sample. Having that in mind, the study complied 268 valid responses.

3.3.1. Main Study

The main survey was developed guided by the pilot's insights and distributed through Qualtrics. Three main parts informed the survey.

First, participants were introduced to the aim of the study. We also informed about User Generated Content (UGC) and its use in tourism industry since these could not be clear to everyone. Participants read the following:

The **User Generated Content** (UGC) is any form of content created by users and published on the Internet, often on social networking platforms. Images, videos, blog or social network posts, tweets, podcasts, reviews, Wikipedia contributions are all forms of UGC, which users produce daily and share on the web.

Once clarified the concept of UGC, participants were asked to answer some questions related to the familiarity with UGC and their travel frequency.

In the second part, participants were shown the promotional video of a tourism destination which is fit for the study thanks to the pilot study done before. Two different videos (scenarios) were randomly and equally distributed among participants by using the randomizer option available in the program. This gives us the possibility to have an equal number of responses for each scenario. All scenarios saw the same video with the exception of the description, which changed with the method in test: content created by the users (UGC) and contents created by the firm (FGC).

UGC Scenario

Now imagine that you are seeking for information about your next travel destination to visit and your attention falls in the following video about a specific destination. You note that the video is created by real travellers during their trip.

FGC Scenario

Now imagine that you are seeking for information about your next travel destination to visit and your attention falls in the following video about a specific destination. You note that the video is created by actors hired by the firm with the only purpose of creating the video.

After viewing the video, participants started the third part of the survey by rating statements according to their perception of authenticity and trust related to the video. Furthermore, questions related to the intention to visit the destination showed in the video, the intention to share and recommend the video

and the destination to others, the influence of UGC in travel decision, and the main purpose in travelling were asked.

At the end, demographics were asked such as age, household income, gender, nationality, and profession.

The table below illustrates how many respondents were assigned to each scenario:

Scenario	Frequency	Percentage
User-Generated Content (UGC)	136	50,7
Firm Generated Content (FGC)	132	49,3

Table 1: Distribution of participants in each scenario

3.3.2. Respondents Profile

The study sample was composed by people with different demographics. Participants are 55,2% male and mostly belong to the Millennials' generation, aged from 25 to 34 years old (54,1%). The dominant nationalities are Italian (28,9%) and American (22,9%). In terms of occupation, the 51,9% of respondents are employed full time and 19,8% are students. Regarding the household income, 35.4% of the participants said that is less than 10.000 €/year and 1,5% more than 150.000 €/year (See Appendix 1 for the summarized results).

3.4. Measurement of the variables

When possible, in order to ensure content validity, items were adopted from past research in the tourism industry and adjusted to the context of the current study. All constructs were measured through a seven-point Likert scale, to maintain the consistency across the study and to make the interpretation and analysis of the results comparable among all dimensions. The only exception was for familiarity with UGC which was measured with a five-point Likert scale. The dependent variables travel intention and WOM intention were measured with three items each adapted from two different studies. The two variables which work as mediators – perceived authenticity and perceived trust – are measured as a mean of respectively six and four items. The construct used to identify the typology of travellers is the so called 20-items International Tourist Role (ITR) (Appendix 2) developed by Mo,

Howard, and Havitz (1993). The manipulation check, demographics and other relevant information about the respondents' travel habits were own constructs.

The Table below summarize the flow of the survey, the source and the items used for each construct.

Construct	Source	Items
Travel Habits	Own Construct	How often do you travel? [1] Never... [7] Once a year
UGC Familiarity	Thompson & Malaviya (2013)	How familiar are you with UGC? [1] Not at all familiar... [5] Extremely familiar
Design-Mode (Manipulation Check)	Own Construct	Who created the contents of the video? [1] Travellers/Customer (UGC) [2] Firm (FGC)
Perceived Trust	Adapted from Cox et al (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What the video advertisement says about the destination is true - I feel I know what to expect from the destination shown - The experiences that people live in the video are reliable - I think I could be one of the people in the video during my trip [1] Strongly Disagree ... [7] "Strongly Agree"
Perceived Authenticity	Adapted from Carmen Antón, Carmen Camarero, Marta Laguna & Dimitrios Buhalis (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The video represents a genuine experience - The video seems offer a real experience in local's community - I think that watching this video gave me better idea of the destination - The video shows the destination as it is - The video shows a unique experience - I think I can live the same experience if I will travel in this destination [1] Strongly Disagree ... [7] "Strongly Agree"

WOM intention	Adapted from Barroso et al. (2007), Yoon and Uysal (2005), and Mason and Paggiaro (2012).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I would recommend the destination saw in the advertisement video - I would share this video on social networks - I would recommend this video to my friends [1] Strongly Disagree ... [7] “Strongly Agree”
Travel decision	Adapted from Jalilvand, M., Ebrahimi, A., & Samiei, N. (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I predict I will visit the destination showed in the video in the future - I would visit the destination in the video rather than any other tourism destination - If everything goes as I think, I will plan to visit the destination showed in the video in the future [1] Strongly Disagree ... [7] “Strongly Agree”
Type of Traveller	Mo,Howard & Havitz,1993	20- Items International Tourist Role scale (ITR) (Appendix 1) [1] Strongly Disagree ... [7] “Strongly Agree”
Control Question	Cox et al (2009)	How likely are you to change your existing travel plans because of the influence of UGC? [1] Extremely unlikely ... [7] Extremely likely
Demographics	Own Construct	Age, gender, nationality, household income, profession

Table 2: Measurements, Sources and Scales

3.4.1. Manipulation check

To analyse if the participants understood correctly the two scenarios in the survey-design (video with UGC vs video with FGC), after showing the tourism destination video advertisement with a related brief description was asked to the respondents which they thought create the contents of the video ([0] Travellers/Customer [2] Firm).

Because the sample was randomly distributed between the two different scenarios, meaning that we have two different samples to compare the means, the independent samples t-test was conducted on Design Mode as test variable and the dummy variable Who created the video? (0= Travelers/Customers; 1=Firm) as grouping variable.

After running the independent samples t-test it was possible to conclude that there was a significant difference in the scores for UGC ($M_{UGC}=0,23$, $SD=0.42$) and FGC ($M_{FGC}=0,65$, $SD=0.48$) conditions ($t(199)=6,572$, $p=0.000$). These results suggest that participants perceived the intended differences about who created the video. In particular those who saw the UGC video ($N=136$) answered mostly that the video was done by UGC ($M_{UGC}=0,23$) while those who saw the FGC video ($N=132$) answered mostly the opposite ($M_{FGC}=0,65$) which was exactly what we expected.

3.4.2. Reliability Analysis

When using a Likert Scale question within the survey it is essential to check the reliability of the scale used, in the sense that the questionnaire should consistently reflect the construct that is measuring. The most commonly used measure of scale reliability is called Cronbach's alpha, α . The generally accepted cut off point of α is .8 (Field, 2005). Thus, in order to see if the construct's internal reliability is appropriate the analysis of reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) was conducted. As well as the total-item correlation. The results show that all the constructs are above .7 and no construct's items were deleted, which allows to confirm a high internal consistency in the survey. Table 4 summarize the Cronbach's Alphas for each construct and the item-correlation for each item.

		Total-Item correlation	Cronbach's alpha
Perceived Trust	What the video advertisement says about the destination is true	.840	.930
	I feel I know what to expect from the destination shown	.846	
	The experiences that people live in the video are reliable	.872	
	I think I could be one of the people in the video during my trip	.796	
Perceived Authenticity	The video represents a genuine experience	.891	.949
	The video seems offer a real experience in local's community	.842	
	I think that watching this video gave me better idea of the destination	.862	
	The video shows the destination as it is	.873	
	The video shows a unique experience	.737	

WOM Intention	I think I can live the same experience if I will travel in this destination	.864	.929
	I would recommend the destination saw in the advertisement video	.782	
	I would share this video on social networks	.878	
	I would recommend this video to my friends	.926	
Travel Intention	I predict I will visit the destination showed in the video in the future	.887	.935
	I would visit the destination in the video rather than any other tourism destination	.828	
	If everything goes as I think, I will plan to visit the destination showed in the video in the future	.882	

Table 3: Reliability Analysis: Cronach's alpha and item correlations

After conducting the reliability analysis four variables with the means of the items that belonged to the construct in question were created: perceived trust, perceived authenticity, WOM intention and travel decision.

4. Analysis and results

4.1. Hypothesis testing

In order to test the first hypothesis (**H1**) where it was argued that consumers will intend recommend a travel destination more when promoted as User-Generated Content than when advertised as Firm-Generated Content, an independent samples t-test with WOM intention as the dependent variable and the two design-mode scenarios as the independent variable. The results illustrate that, when a destination is promoted with UGC, consumers show a significant higher WOM intention, than when advertised with contents generated by the firm ($M_{UGC} = 5.05$; $SD_{UGC} = 1.62$ vs. $M_{FGC} = 4.22$; $SD_{FGC} = 1.89$), $t(266) = 3.882$, $p = 0.000$. Thus, **H1 is supported**.

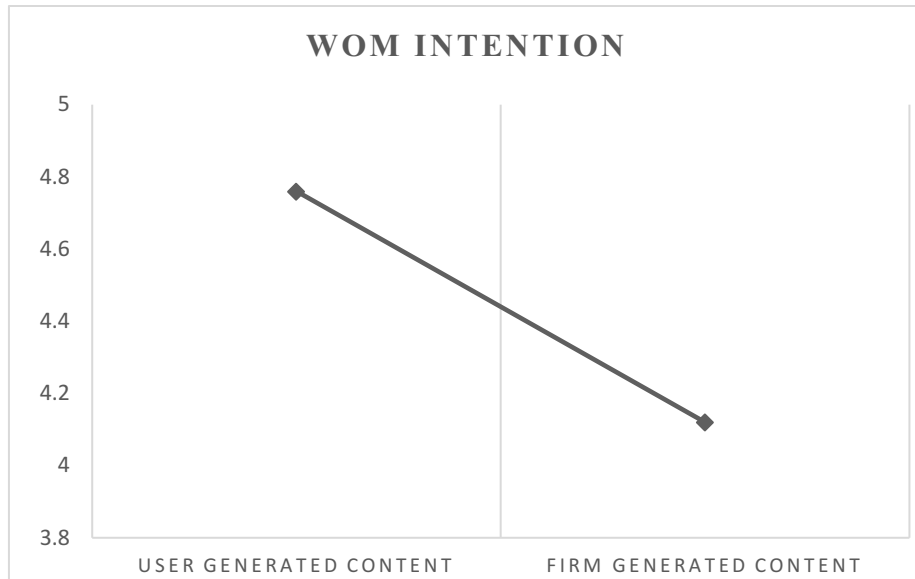


Table 4: Mean results for WOM intention on design mode

Moreover, also to test the first hypothesis (**H2**), another independent samples t-test with travel intention as the dependent variable and the two design-mode scenarios as the independent variable was conducted. Even in this case, results illustrate that consumers did show a significant higher travel intention when the destination is advertised with UGC compared to FGC ($M_{UGC}=4.76$; $SD_{UGC}=1.61$ vs. $M_{FGC}=4.12$; $SD_{FGC}=1.84$), $t(266)=3.045$, $p=0.003$. Thus, **our results support H2**.

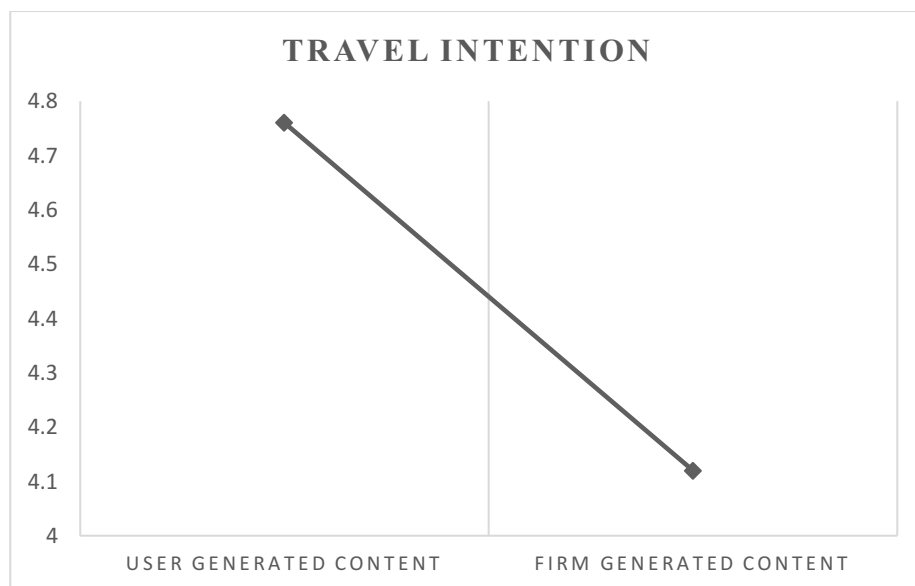


Table 5: Mean results for travel intention on design mode

In order to test the third and fourth hypothesis, where it was argued that perception of authenticity (**H3**) and trust (**H4**) act as mediators in the relationship between the preference for tourism destination promotional video advertising and intention to travel in the advertised specific destination (**H3a**, **H4a**) and WOM intention (**H3b**, **H4b**), a simple mediation analysis was performed. The mediation effect analysis was done with PROCESS in SPSS Statistics and Model 4 was chosen. Two mediation analysis was run: the first in which the outcome variable for the analysis was travel intention and the second one in which WOM intention was used as the outcome variable. The prediction variable used in both cases was design mode recoded as a dummy variable (0=FGC, 1=UGC) and the mediation variables were perceived authenticity and perceived trust. The figure below summarizes the analysis done.

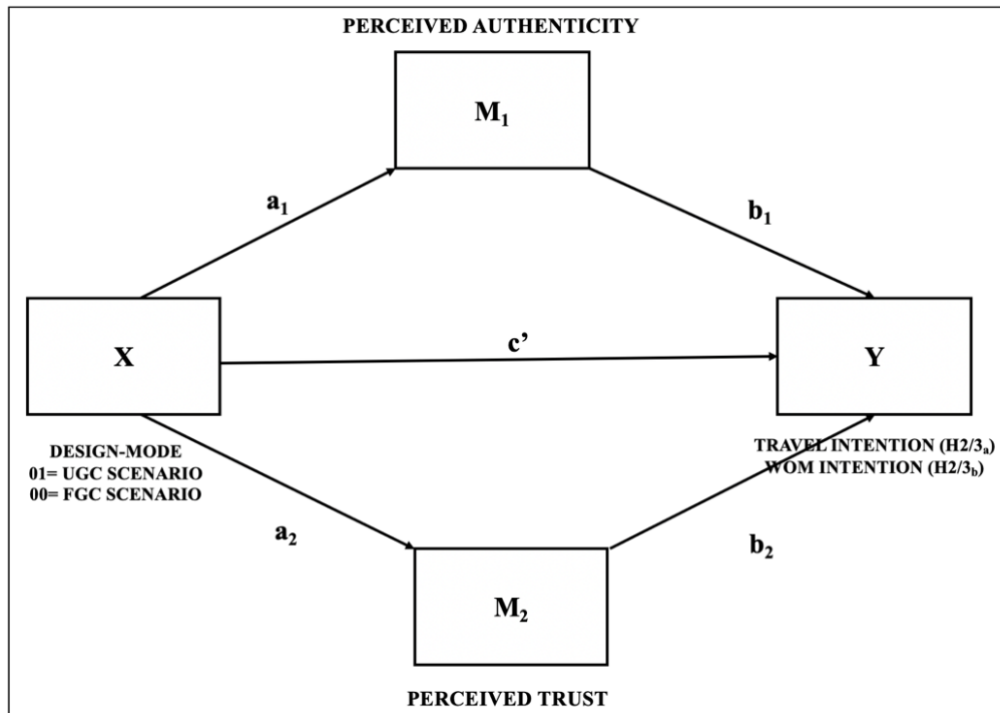


Figure 2: Simple mediation analysis (model)

Results from the first simple mediation analysis indicated that design mode is indirectly related to travel intention through its relationship with perceived authenticity and perceived trust. UGC advertisement reported higher perceived authenticity than FGC and significant positive coefficient ($a_1 = .8105$, $p < .000$; $M_{UGC} = 5.21$, $SD_{UGC} = 1.32$; $M_{FGC} = 4.40$; $SD_{FGC} = 1.79$; $p < 0.05$), and when the perceived authenticity increases, travel intention increases as well because of significant positive coefficient ($b_1 = .5290$, $p < .000$). The same happened for perceived trust. Higher trust was related to

UGC advertisement compared to FGC and appear to have significant positive coefficient ($a_2=.7615$, $p<.000$; $M_{UGC}= 5.30, SD_{UGC}=1.20$; $M_{FGC}=4.54$; $SD_{FGC}=1.73$; $p<0.05$), and when perceived trust increases subsequently even travel intention increase ($b_2=.2141$ $p<.05$). To test the significance effect of the indirect effect bootstrapping analysis was used. It is an alternative way to perform null hypothesis testing that can be applied to the test of the indirect effect (ab) to determine if it is different from zero (Hayes, 2013). A 95% bias-corrected confidence interval based on 10,000 bootstrap samples indicated that the perceived authenticity indirect effect ($ab =.5290$) was positive and significant because the interval C.I [.2519, .8387] does not included the zero. The same was for the perceived trust indirect effect which was positive and significant ($ab_2=.2141$; 95%C.I [.0556, .4514]. By looking at the coefficient for the direct effect, the result appears to be non-significant ($c'=-.0994$; $p>0.05$), meaning that design mode does not influence travel intention while the indirect effect through authenticity and trust is significant. So, all the effect is explained because of perceived authenticity and perceived trust. For this reason, it is possible to state that there is a full mediation effect.

After conducting the second simple mediation analysis we could assume that there is a full mediation effect for both perceived authenticity and trust related to WOM intention. In fact, both perceived trust ($b_1=.2280$; $p<0.05$) and perceived authenticity ($b_2=.6163$; $p<0.000$) were related to higher WOM Intention. Furthermore, the perceived authenticity indirect effect ($ab_1=.6163$; 95%C.I=.3111,.9681) resulted to be positive and significant as well as the perceived trust one ($ab_2=.1736$; 95%C.I [0.214,.3673].

In conclusion, **the third and fourth hypothesis were supported.**

To understand if there is a different level of perceived authenticity depending on the type of traveller and specifically, if the Cohen's drifter typology perceives the advertising as more authentic compare to the others, the first thing that needed to be done was to identify different typologies of travellers from the 20-items ITR scale developed. The first step to obtaining the tourist typologies of the sample respondents was to test the reliability of the ITR scale and to reduce its 20 items into a smaller number of dimensions through factor analysis. Then, cluster analysis was run to see if the respondents could be effectively classified into distinct tourist typologies with the ITR scale.

Factor Analysis

The ITR scale consisting of 20 items measuring the respondent's novelty related travel behaviour was tested in order to see its reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed as 0.904, which

is above the general cut-off rate of 0.80. After the reliability test the factor analysis was conducted on the all 20 ITR items to reduce the set of factors that could be used in cluster analysis for clustering respondents into distinct tourist typologies. To test the appropriateness of the factor model, the Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and the Bartlett's test were used. The KMO measure of .888, above .7 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant, with a $p = 0.00$, means that the sample from which these data were collected was adequate. Looking at commonalities, all the items are above 0.6 which means that the 4 factors account for most of the variance in all variables. The Eigenvalues analysis was the method utilized to arrive at a factor solution. A total of four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted. The results are shown in Table 6. The percentage of variance explained is 73%.

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of the Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.740	38.698	38.698
2	4.535	22.673	61.371
3	1.298	6.488	67.860
4	1.105	5.527	73.387

Table 6: Factor analysis extraction

The factors extracted were rotated based on the varimax approach, then subjected to reliability analysis and saved as variables. In this way each respondent would have four means score. Further analysis would be done based on these scores instead of the 20 ITR variable values. Table 7 presents the four factors with their corresponding statements, factor loadings and reliability coefficients. Being a factor is a group of attributes or questions that measure the same thing, each factor extracted was named according to what it measures.

		Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha
	<i>Factor 1, Familiarity</i>		
ITR1:	I prefer to travel to countries where the people are of the same ethnic group as mine.	0.857	
ITR2:	I prefer to travel to countries where the culture is similar to mine.	0.862	
ITR3:	I prefer to travel to countries where there are international hotel chains.	0.780	0.940
ITR4:	I prefer to travel to countries where they have the same tourist infrastructure as in my country.	0.868	
ITR5:	I prefer to travel to countries where there are restaurants familiar to me.	0.844	

ITR6:	I prefer to travel to countries where they have the same transportation system as in my country.	0.806	
ITR7:	I prefer to travel to countries that are popular tourist destinations.	0.603	
ITR8:	I put a high priority on familiarity when thinking of travel destinations.	0.633	
ITR9:	I prefer to travel to countries with well-developed travel industries.	0.581	
<i>Factor 2, Novelty</i>			
ITR15:	I prefer to associate with the local people when traveling in a foreign country.	0.782	
ITR16:	I prefer to live the way the people I visit live by sharing their shelter, food, and customs during my stay.	0.776	
ITR17:	I prefer to seek excitement of complete novelty by engaging in direct contact with a wide variety of new and different people	0.844	
ITR18:	If I find a place that particularly pleases me, I may stop there long enough for social involvement in the life of the place to occur.	0.782	0.899
ITR19:	I prefer to make friends with local people when travelling in a foreign country.	0.836	
ITR20:	I prefer to have as much personal contact with the local people as possible when traveling in a foreign country.	0.848	
<i>Factor 3, Pre-planned holiday through travel agencies</i>			
ITR10:	I prefer to be on a guided tour when traveling in a foreign country.	0.804	
ITR11:	I prefer to make all of my major arrangements through travel agencies when traveling in a foreign country.	0.812	0.900
ITR12:	I prefer to have travel agencies take complete care of me, from beginning to end, when traveling in a foreign country.	0.794	
<i>Factor 4, Adventure</i>			
ITR13:	I prefer to start a trip with no pre-planned or definite timetables when traveling in a foreign country.	0.806	0.834
ITR14:	I prefer to start a trip with no pre-planned or definite routes when traveling in a foreign country.	0.846	

Table 7: Factors description, correlations and Cronbach's alphas

Cluster Analysis

The study clustered responses based on the four factors identified in the ITR scale development procedure. The factor scores were used because they are more reliable than a single variable. The greater reliability is due because the factor scores are weighted linear combinations of variables and more readily interpreted than a huge number of variables (Lorr 1983, p. 14). The K-means clustering method was used because it appears to be more robust than any other hierarchical methods (Punj and

Stewart 1983). Various cluster solutions were tried, but the four-cluster solution seemed to be the most appropriate. The F ratios that describe the differences between the clusters were computed. The observed significance levels should not be interpreted in the usual fashion because the clusters have been selected to maximize the differences between clusters. All four factors contributed to differentiating the clusters ($p < 0.000$). After all of the cases are clustered, the cluster centre computed one last time. Using the final cluster centre was possible to describe every cluster. *Cluster 1* appeared to have a strong preference in looking for novelty when travelling, especially to be excited by engaging with new and local people, together with a great sense of adventure gave by a non-pre planned schedule and routes. This traveller descriptions can be associated with the n's *Drifter*. Members of *Cluster 2* are more attracted by familiarity instead of novelty but still keeping a strong sense of adventure in discovering destinations with no completely pre-planned holiday. They like popular and familiar destinations and also to have a little control over their holiday, even if they are less adventurous compared to components of cluster 2. Members description is related to the Cohen's *Individual Mass Tourist*. *Cluster 3* is characterized by a strongly negative preference for adventure and travel agencies planned holidays People of this cluster have a strong passion for seeking novelty when travelling. They want to engage in direct contact with a wide variety of new, different and local people and they can change their plans according to the social environment of the destination. Members of cluster 3 don't like that much adventure, in terms of no having a pre-organized plan, in fact, they like to have comfort and security when travelling. These people are associated with Cohen's *Explorer*. Finally, *Cluster 4* has a clear preference for a pre-planned trip, in fact, on their holiday decision-process, they choose a holiday package to a popular destination and largely prefers to travel around with a huge group of another tourist. They usually follow a predetermine an inflexible itinerary. Members of cluster 4 are similar to *Organized Mass Tourist* described by Cohen. Table 8 describes all the four clusters, including how many respondents fall in each cluster.

Cluster N°	Cluster Name	Abbreviation	Number	Percentage
1	Drifter	DR	89	34.4
2	Individual Mass Tourist	IMT	56	21.6
3	Explorer	EX	56	21.6
4	Organized Mass Tourist	OMT	58	22.4

Table 8: Clusters description

In order to test our hypothesis and see if the different types of tourist identified by the cluster analysis have a different perception of advertisement authenticity an ANOVA test was run. Perceived

authenticity was used as dependent variable while the cluster number of cases as independent variable. The Levene's test of homogeneity of Variance shows that there is no a statistically significant differences between the variance ($p=.476$) so H_0 is not rejected, which means that the variances of the groups are the same. Therefore, the assumption of the homogeneity of variances is not violated and the ANOVA test can be applied.

ANOVA	Statistics	P-Value
QCL	4.422	0.005

Table 9: ANOVA results for clusters on perceived authenticity

The H_0 of the ANOVA test says that there is a statistically significant difference between the group means. The results illustrate that $p=.005$, so H_0 is not rejected, which means that there is a significant difference between the group means.

Cluster	Mean	Standard Deviation
Drifter	5.27	1.50
Individual Mass Tourist	4.32	1.74
Explorer	4.65	1.59
Organized Mass Tourist	4.78	1.56

Table 10: Descriptives results for cluster means on perceived authenticity

Looking into Tukey post-hoc test it was found that only one interaction was significant. In fact, the mean score for the Drifter type of traveller ($M_D = 5,27$, $SD_D = 1.50$) was significantly different than Individual Mass Tourist ($M_{IMT} = 4,32$ $SD_{IMT} = 0.84$; p value= 0.003)

H5 is partially supported, in the sense that is possible to say that considering just Individual Mass Tourist and Drifter, the Drifter is the group that perceives a higher authenticity but we can not say anything about the other two groups of traveller because there is no a significant difference between them.

4. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to explore if the use of UGC to produce a tourism destination promotional advertising video could influence the traveller's destination decision and WOM intention and that this effect would have been mediated by trust and authenticity.

Our work provides several interesting findings. First, our results support the hypothesis that consumers showed high likelihood of engaging in WOM and travel intention when they are exposed to UGC. In fact, the intention to travel of people who saw the User-Generated Content advertisement was higher compared to the ones who saw the advertisement realized by the firm's actors. This means that participants, on average, demonstrate more intention to travel to a destination when this destination is advertised by using real experiences of real people.

Second, WOM intentions were also more likely when the advertisement was done as UGC. With the emergence of the internet, WOM has become an important factor affecting in tourism, both in the decision-making decisions regarding travel and vacation planning and in the search for information of tourism products and services in order to reduce uncertainty and perceived risks.

Third, higher travel and WOM intention is fully accounted by perception of authenticity and trust in relation to the content source of the advertisement. People who saw the destination advertisement done by UGC tend to have higher intention to travel in that destination and WOM intention compared to firm's professional, but this effect is explained by the mediating influence of the perceived authenticity and trust of the advertisement source. This is in line with literature that shows a growing scepticism from consumers about commercial advertising done by firms. People perceive firm's advertising, especially in tourism, as a way to gain profits, more than recommend a destination or a travel experience. Thus, the trust and the authenticity are attenuated. One tool to fight this scepticism and increase the level of trust and authenticity was found to be the use of User-Generated-Content.

Finally, four typologies of travellers were identified in line with Cohen's types of tourist's characteristics: the drifter, the individual mass tourist, the explorer, and the organized mass tourist. From the analysis, it was demonstrated that Cohen's drifter typology of traveller perceived a higher authenticity but just compared to another group of travellers, the Individual Mass Tourist. This confirmed our initial hypothesis only partially, because it was not possible to state anything related to the other two groups, the explorer and the organized mass tourists.

5. Managerial Implications

Our results can assist travel managers and tourism bodies to better create communication strategies in several ways. The study found out a possible solution to promote destinations in order to increase attractiveness and create competitive advantage both for travel agencies and destinations themselves – the use of User-Generated Content.

Nowadays, traveling is part of people's lifestyle and the way in which travel planning decisions are made has changed. When choosing a travel destination, tourists are now faced with a greater number of options due to decrease in travel costs and increased available income. At the same, the internet technology gives potential tourist the easily access to a great amount of information. In fact, tourists find different alternatives when it comes to the moment of planning vacation, leading them to potentially feel overwhelmed with choices (Thai & Yuksel, 2017).

This vast amount of information also generates a problem of trust for potential tourists, who have the desire that the information found reflects reality. In addition, researches have stated that travellers are increasingly seeking authenticity thanks to the birth and development of experiential tourism.

This thesis develops interesting insights for online travel advisors, tourism marketing organizations, tour operators and travel destinations themselves. First, the use of UGC to advertise a destination has been shown to have a greater impact on travel and WOM intention than FGC. This means that User-Generated Content by travellers is a true boon for travel agents in a world so dominated by visual images. In fact, promoting a destination with content created by real tourists, who have lived real experiences, makes people more likely to decide to visit that destination because they perceive what they see as trustfully and authentic. Taking advantage of the rich detail in the images can be a way to position the company or the destination well ahead of the others which do not. Travelers are looking for holidays that create meaningful interactions with people and cultures, new knowledge, happiness, fulfilment and lasting memories. That's why travel companies in promoting a destination should not only say what they have to offer but also find ways to tell the story of the destination, the unique experiences people can live, the culture, the food, etc. UGC can be used in advertisements to create awareness, to reach new potential customers at low cost, to cultivate those already acquired, to trigger digital word of mouth, to invite users to take certain actions and to get valuable feedback on destinations, experiences and structures.

What the firms should do in line with the results obtained is to create a real UGC communication strategy. First of all, it is necessary to design since the beginning the dynamics regarding how to involve users. Firms will need to think about a "landing platform" suitable to collect and share User Generated Content. Social media such as Facebook or Instagram are perfect to share quick videos about destination created with UGC and gain a large number of views. It will then be necessary to convince people to share their content. For travel companies one way could be to create a membership and as people share their contents with the firms and if the firms use them to advertise, the membership "grows" (silver, bronze, gold etc.) and people have access to more and more discounts.

Moreover, from the analysis conducted it comes out that the authenticity of a video promoting a destination is perceived higher by the type of traveller who seeks for adventure and full immersion with the local community (drifter) compared to the type of traveller who is seeking for less adventure, likes to plan their vacations with the help of travel agencies but still having little control on the plans (individual mass tourist). Because of that, travel companies who have these two types of segments as customers should try to direct videos made with UGC more to the drifters' type of travellers. It will help the creation of personas and then develop offers and communications messages targeted to each one.

Finally, UGC should be included in travel companies and companies dedicated to the promotion of specific destination marketing strategy as it is a tool by which people spread the voice, talk, and recommend the destination itself. In fact, a great way to promote a destination is to make sure that many people hear about it. And one way to do this is by encouraging people who have already visited the destination to become real sponsors of the visited place. For this reason, travel companies should open companies' borders and invite consumers to be part of the promotion of a destination so that the contents show appears to be more authentic and trustful and consequently increase the customer's intention to travel and to spread the voice. One of the best tools that could be used in order to facilitate the WOM is the creation of a hashtag to spread and go viral.

6. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to current literature in three main fields.

Firstly, it adds some insight regarding the effect of UGC on tourism sector (Cox et al., 2009, Ukpabi and Karjaluoto, 2018). UGC is demonstrated to be a powerful tool for travel companies to advertise a destination by increasing intention to visit and recommend. Second, contributes to understand the role played by trust (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011, Cox et al, 2009, Yoo et al., 2009) and authenticity (Wang,

1999; McCannel, 1973) on behavioral intention of tourists. In particular, it was confirmed that both of them are extremely important when making a travel decision and that UGC amplifies their perception. Finally, this study, gave empirical foundations to the Cohen's (1972) types of tourists and their relationship with the authenticity perceived which was proposed by other researchers (Kim et al, 2011) but never tested.

7. Limitation and Further Research

This study has several three main limitations that warrant discussion and provide opportunities for further research.

The first limitation is related to the stimulus used. Although it was carefully select after conducted a pilot study to test if it was in line with our purpose it results to be hypothetical. To get more valuable insight it would be better to test results in a real decision situation. What could be done is to test a real advertising and check the click through rate for each ad. In this way, the effectiveness of an online advertising campaign would be better measured. In fact, by using co-opting strategy, in which firms encourage customers to create ads but retain final say on the message that is broadcasted (Berthon, Pitt and Campbell, 2008) result to be an effect way to promote the firms' products and services.

Another limitation come from the fact that cultural dimensions are not taken in consideration. For example, uncertainty avoidance's (UA) Hofstede cultural dimension, is likely to be an important cultural dimension influencing how consumers from different countries make purchasing decisions. UA reflects a culture's tolerance for ambiguity. One would expect that in high UA cultures, factors related to uncertainty reduction (such as UGC) would be more important determinants of travel and WOM intention than in low UA cultures (Karahanna et al, 2013).

Finally, due to the period in which the study was developed, it is possible that it has influenced the survey results. In fact, the COVID-19 Pandemic has had devastating effects in the tourism sector, the main argument for this argument. In particular, the sense of uncertainty that pervaded people due to this situation could have push people towards a preference for content generated by firms because considered as more certified information.

Future research should look to consumer characteristics which may impact how the authenticity and the trust of the advertisement are perceived, such as the age, since millennials could be more

influenced by User-Generated content compared to Baby Boomers, the preferences in the activities done during vacations and the consumers' personality traits.

Moreover, authenticity and trust are just two perceptions connected with User-Generated content. For this reason, further researches could focus on find new connections to better develop travel companies marketing strategy and create a competitive advantage for the destinations such as the sense of identification with the people in the advertisement. Furthermore, as it was tested the travel and WOM intention, future research could be focusing on the intention to spend.

Finally, it could be interesting to analyse and develop which would be the best strategy in order to convince people to share their content with the firm which can consequently use to create the advertisement.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Survey Respondents Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Under 18	1	0.4
	18-24	53	19.8
	25-34	145	54.1
	35-44	47	17.5
	45-60	17	6.3
	Over 60	5	1.9
Sex	Male	148	55.2
	Female	120	44.8
Profession	Employed Full Time	139	51.9
	Employed Part-Time	44	16.4
	Unemployed looking for work	27	10.1
	Retired	4	1.5
	Student	1	0.4
		53	19.8
Nationality	Italian	77	28.9
	German	13	4.9
	Spanish	10	3.8
	Portuguese	13	4.9
	Austrian	1	0.4
	British	12	4.5
	American	61	22.9
	Other	79	29.7
Household income (€/year)	Less than 10,000	95	35.4
	10,000 – 19,000	57	21.3
	20,000 – 29,999	34	12.7
	30,000 – 39,999	23	8.6
	40,000 – 49,999	22	8.2
	50,000 – 59,999	8	3.0
	60,000 – 69,999	5	2.2
	70,000 – 79,999	4	1.9
	80,000 – 89,000	4	1.5
	90,000 – 99,999	4	1.5
	100,000 - 149,000	6	2.2
	More than 150,000	4	1.5

Appendix 2 - International Tourist Role (ITR) Scale

Construct	Items
Destination Oriented Dimension (DOD)	I prefer to travel to countries where the people are of the same ethnic group as mine.
	I prefer to travel to countries where the culture is similar to mine.
	I prefer to travel to countries where there are international hotel chains.
	I prefer to travel to countries where they have the same tourist infrastructure as in my country
	I prefer to travel to countries where there are restaurants familiar to me.
	I prefer to travel to countries where they have the same transportation system as in my country.
	I prefer to travel to countries that are popular tourist destinations.
	I put high priority on familiarity when thinking of travel destinations.
	I prefer to travel to countries with well-developed travel industries.
	I prefer to be on a guided tour when traveling in a foreign country.
Tourist Services Dimension (TSD)	I prefer to make all of my major arrangements through travel agencies when traveling in a foreign country.
	I prefer to have travel agencies take complete care of me, from beginning to end, when traveling in a foreign country.
	I prefer to start a trip with no preplanned or definite timetables when traveling in a foreign country.
	I prefer to start a trip with no preplanned or definite routes when traveling in a foreign country.
	I prefer to associate with the local people when traveling in a foreign country.
Social Contact Dimension (SCD)	I prefer to live the way the people I visit live by sharing their shelter, food, and customs during my stay.
	I prefer to seek excitement of complete novelty by engaging in direct contact with a wide variety of new and different people.
	If I find a place that particularly pleases me, I may stop there long enough for social involvement in the life of the place to occur.

I prefer to make friends with the local people when traveling in a foreign country.

I prefer to have as much personal contact with the local people as possible when traveling in a foreign country
